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Date: Dec. 13, 2022
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 13, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Larsen will continue on Community Development Agency Board

Peg Larsen will continue to serve on the Community Development Agency Board for a second term as the District 3 representative after the Washington County Board of Commissioners made the re-appointment Dec. 13.

Her current term will begin Jan. 1, 2023, and expire Dec. 31, 2025.

Contact: Jennifer Ochocki, Coordinator to the County Administrator, 651-430-6010

County Board comments on tax increment financing district in St. Paul Park

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved comments Dec. 13 on a tax increment financing district in St. Paul Park.

The City of St. Paul Park has set a public hearing for Dec. 19 to consider the creation of a new tax increment financing (TIF) district for a 13-acre new construction residential development consisting of 26 single-family rental homes and five two-story apartment buildings with 24 rental homes in each. The number of residences planned is 146, of which at least 20% of the units shall be available for rent by persons whose incomes do not exceed 50% of areawide median family income, as adjusted for family size.

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Washington County is an equal opportunity organization and employer

By law, the city must provide a 30-day notice to the county and the county may provide comments to the city to be included in the public record of the public hearing. County staff reviewed the plan and a draft comment letter was prepared for the board's consideration.

In the comment letter, the county expressed its support for the housing project as being consistent with the County Board's goals through the Community Development Agency to support the efforts of cities within the county to increase access to affordable housing options for residents.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy County Administrator, 651-430-6007

County will continue to work with Canvas Health for services

Washington County will continue to work with Canvas Health to provide services to county residents for the next six months, after the County Board approved the extension of the agency's contract Dec. 13.

The board approved an agreement in the amount of \$619,981.17 to extend the contract with the agency through June 30, 2023.

Washington County is in the process of issuing a Request for Proposal for these services. The new contract resulting from this proposal will begin July 1, 2023.

Canvas Health provides services to children, adolescents, adults, elderly individuals, and families who struggle with aging, crises, chemical and mental health, and domestic and sexual abuse.

Washington County has contracted with Canvas Health for many years to provide many state-mandated mental health services and other services to county residents, with the majority of services falling under this contract. These services include adult psychiatry, crisis clinic psychiatry services, outpatient mental health services, psychological and parenting evaluation services, abuse and recovery services, case management for children diagnosed as Seriously Emotionally Disturbed, and family-based treatment services.

Contact: Sarah Amundson, Community Services Division Director, 651-430-6597

County will receive funds from state to assist mental health initiatives

Washington County will receive \$2.16 million from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to provide adult mental services from Jan. 1, 2023, through Dec. 31, 2024.

The County Board approved a grant agreement with the agency Dec. 13.

The Adult Mental Health Initiative and Community Support Program grant agreement provides community-based services to individuals who are identified as Seriously and Persistently Mentally Ill. Community-based services include housing subsidies, support for people experiencing homelessness, in-home skills development, community-based nursing services, crisis intervention training, psychiatric services, funding for traditionally non-reimbursed individual needs, residential crisis stabilization services, and mobile crisis services. In addition, the Adult Mental Health Initiative grant funds support adult mental health case management staff positions.

Contact: Kathy Mickelson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6532

Library receives \$30,000 anonymous donation

The Washington County Library will receive a \$30,000 donation from an anonymous donor after the County Board accepted the donation Dec. 13.

The Library has received donations for a number of years from this donor, who wishes to remain anonymous. In the past, the Library used the donation to purchase materials and provide staff training. This year it is recommended that the funds be used to support demand for the electronic book and audio collections.

Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Library Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504

County will receive funds to fight aquatic invasive species

Washington County will receive \$134,710 in 2023 to fight aquatic invasive species after the County Board requested the allocation from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource Dec. 13.

In the 2014 state legislative session, a county aid program was created to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota lakes and rivers. The funding distributions associated with the county aid program is based on the number of watercraft trailer launches, which is 24 in Washington County, and watercraft trailer parking spaces, of which Washington County has 354.

A county plan or resolution must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources annually by the last day of each calendar year before funds can be distributed for the following year.

Contact: Tom Dietrich, Public Health & Environment Planner, 651-430-6716

County Board approves annual agreement with conservation district

Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an annual agreement for services from the Washington County Conservation District Dec. 13.

The services, which will be delivered during 2023, will cost \$280,000.

The Washington Conservation District provides technical assistance and educational services to promote and apply soil and water conservation practices throughout the county.

Funding is for the organization's administrative activities, and services in the areas of local water management, land and water treatment, and public education. The contract reflects support of the Washington Conservation District's administrative operations, including performance management and reporting requirements.

Contact: Jessica Collin-Pilarski, Public Health & Environment Planner, 651-430-6703

Sheriff's Office receives \$3,100 from Prohibition Barbers to pay for K9 vest

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive a \$3,100 donation from Prohibition Barbers to pay for a K9 vest after the County Board accepted the donation Dec. 13.

Prohibition Barbers Inc. in Stillwater conducted a fundraising event Nov. 20 to fund a custom canine vest for Deputy David Peters' new K9 partner Red.

Members of the Sheriff's Office expressed its appreciation for the donation and greatly appreciates the support to the Washington County K9 unit.

Contact: Laura Perkins, Public Information Officer, 651-430-7994

County Board receives audit highlights, notes financial reporting awards

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received a report on the highlights of the 2021 annual financial audit for the county Dec. 13, as well as a summary of the county's 2021 financial statement and a presentation of awards from the Government Finance Officers Association.

The annual financial report for 2021 highlights showed that the county's net position increased by \$45.5 million, driven by investments in capital assets, a reduction in bonded debt, intergovernmental funding, and investment returns. The county's unrestricted net position has bounced back from

showing a negative balance following a change in reporting requirements in 2018 related to new Other Post Employment Benefits reporting requirements.

The unrestricted fund balance increased, while expenditures also increased. The fund balance increased by \$8.8 million, while intergovernmental revenues went down, offset by increased construction project cost shares, and strong investment performance in the General Fund.

When viewing exclusively the general fund group, the county's general fund has approximately 5.7 months of expenditures in unrestricted fund balance.

To comply with state law, the county's summary financial statement will be published in the county's official newspapers, the Country Messenger and the Stillwater Gazette. It will have charts of the county's 2021 revenue and expenditures, fund financial statements, and a statement of the county's fiduciary net position. It will also list any disbursement of funds of more than \$5,000.

The board received the Government Financial Officers Association (GFOA) 2020 Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and the GFOA 2020 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting.

This is the 36th consecutive year the county has received the award for the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The award is intended to recognize and encourage excellence in financial reporting by state and local governments. The county's consistent participation in the program demonstrates its commitment to quality financial management practices and open and clear communication with its residents. Of Minnesota counties, 20% received the award, and nationally, fewer than 20% of counties received the award. The award has a direct impact when rating agencies assess the county's financial practices during the bond issuance process.

The board also received the second GFOA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award. This report is designed to be readily accessible and easily understandable to the general public. It aims to reduce jargon and technical language, and includes charts and graphs to assist users in understanding the county's financial position. Of the 87 counties in Minnesota, five received the award; nationally, 4% of counties received the award.

The board also received the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the county's 2022 Budget. The award marks the 25th consecutive year of receiving the award. To receive the award, the budget document is submitted to the GFOA and goes through a number of peer reviews to determine

if the quality of the document meets the nationally recognized standards for effective budget presentation. The document must meet all 14 mandatory criteria on which it is rated to receive an award. The award program began in 1998 and is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting. Of the 87 counties in Minnesota five received this award, and less than 9% of counties nationally received this award.

Contact: Carl Jacobson, Principal Accountant, 651-430-6044



The Washington County Board of Commissioners accept awards from the Government Finance Officers Association Dec. 13. The commissioners are with the county's finance staff, front row, Nicki Castro, Joua Yang, Commissioner Lisa Weik, District 5, Janna Oman, Shanna Fulkerson, Carl Jacobson, Betty Quinn, and Commissioner Gary Kriesel, District 3, and back row, Commissioner Stan Karwoski, District 2, Jill Zenzola, Tabatha Hansen, Commissioner Fran Miron, District 1, and Commissioner Wayne Johnson, District 4.

County will receive funds to continue family home visiting services

Washington County will receive a five-year Strong Foundations grant to continue to provide evidence-based family home visiting services.

The County Board approved the grant agreement and accepted the first year's funding of \$817,486 Dec. 13.

The county added evidence-based family home visiting services to existing home visiting work in 2007. Funding to support home visiting comes from several federal, state, and local sources. The Minnesota Department of Health has recently combined multiple funding streams into a single grant in an effort to ease administrative and reporting burdens.

The county employs two teams of public health nurses to provide home visiting services. Public health nurses work alongside families to:

- promote and support healthy pregnancies and healthy babies;
- promote and support safe environments;
- nurture parent-child relationships;
- optimize language, motor skills, and brain development for early learning; and
- help families achieve their goals and thrive.

Services are free and voluntary, help improve maternal health and child development, and support families' transition to parenthood.

Contact: Emily Robb, Program Manager of Nursing Services, 651-430-4032

County will request that state perform speed studies

The Washington County Board of Commissioners will request that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) perform speed studies on a number of county roadways, after the County Board approved the request Dec. 13.

According to state law, the commissioner of MnDOT has the authority to determine speed limits on a county highway. It is normal procedure to request such a determination after a roadway has undergone major changes, such as reconstruction, expansion, or significant changes to the roadside character or access.

The county will request that engineering and traffic studies be done to determine the reasonable and safe speed limits be conducted at the following locations, which have recently been subject either to roadway alteration projects or have experienced adjacent development:

- County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 10 (10th Street North) from 1,350 feet east of CSAH 15 (Manning Avenue) to CSAH 21 (Stagecoach Trail) in West Lakeland Township;
- CSAH 12 (Wildwood Road and Mahtomedi Avenue) from Highway 120 (Century Avenue) to the junction with Highway 244 and Stillwater Road in the cities of Mahtomedi and White Bear Lake;
- CSAH 12 (Stillwater Road and 75th Street North) from CSAH 29 (Hilton Trail) to CSAH 9 (Jamaca Avenue) and Stillwater Road in the cities of Mahtomedi and Grant;
- CSAH 13 (Ideal Avenue) from CSAH 14 (34th Street North) to 200 feet north of the intersection with Hidden Bay Trail in the cities of Oakdale and Lake Elmo;
- CSAH 15 (Manning Avenue) from the Highway 36 eastbound ramps to 1,100 feet north of 62nd Street North in the cities of Lake Elmo, Grant, and Stillwater, and Stillwater Township;
- CSAH 17 (Lake Elmo Avenue) from CSAH 14 (Stillwater Boulevard) to 43rd Street North in the City of Lake Elmo;
- CSAH 19 (Keats Avenue and Woodbury Drive) from CSAH 22 (70th Street North) to CSAH 18 (Bailey Road) in the cities of Cottage Grove and Woodbury; and
- County Road 74 (65th Street South) from CSAH 38 (Hastings Avenue) to CSAH 13 (Hinton Avenue) in the cities of Newport and Cottage Grove.

Contact: Mitch Bartelt, Engineer, 651-430-4349

County Board adopts county fee schedule for 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners adopted the county's fee schedule for 2023 Dec. 13.

The board conducted a public hearing on the proposed fee schedule Nov. 15.

The county's fee schedule is governed by county policy, as well as state laws and rules. The policy states that when a single user is the beneficiary of a service, the costs of the service should be borne by that individual. Service delivery costs can be supported by revenue other than user fees when there is a public benefit provided by the service.

The county policy is to set fees that have a reasonable relation between the fee and the cost of providing the service, as well as a number of other considerations.

Programs throughout the county may require fees, and each is reviewed and considered for changes each year. Changes in fees are made to reflect changes in services offered, as well as any state legislative changes that affect county services and related fees.

Information on fees charged for services and programs may be found on the county's website www.co.washington.mn.us.

Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Senior Communications Specialist, 651-430-6026

County Board approves 2023-2027 capital improvement plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a capital improvement plan (CIP) for the county for 2023-2027 Dec. 13, after conducting a public hearing on the plan Nov. 14.

Comment letters were received from a number of county cities, including Cottage Grove, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Oakdale, Oak Park Heights, Scandia, Stillwater, Woodbury, and Baytown Township, Rice Creek Watershed District, and Summit Management.

The plan includes major roadways, parks, and facility projects in the county planned for the next five years, and those projects that are funded by bonds. Along with those projects, specific projects for 2023 are included.

Roads and bridges make up 70% of the proposed projects in the five-year plan, with public facilities making up 26%, and parks and land making up 4%.

Funding comes from a number of sources, including intergovernmental revenue, the local option sales tax for roads and bridges and for transit, and bonds.

More than 75 projects or programs are included in the capital plan, with \$398 million in planned investments in infrastructure over the next five years.

The CIP includes more than \$17 million in investments at seven different county parks and trails, along with major maintenance projects at location across the county. They include:

- renovations to the shelter and play area at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park;
- facility improvements at Point Douglas Park;
- an extension of the Hardwood Creek Trail, and
- parks and trails pavement preservation.

Public facilities improvements include renovations at the Stillwater Government Center campus, and a new service center in Woodbury, as well as improvements to the highway maintenance facility in Woodbury and the Park Grove and R.H. Stafford libraries.

Major roadway improvements planned for the coming five years include:

- more than a mile of improvements to a portion of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 32 in Forest Lake;
- a grade-separated intersection at Highway 36 and CSAH 17 at the border of Grant and Lake Elmo;
- a half-mile of improvements of County Road 74 in Cottage Grove;
- more than six miles of improvements on County Road 50 from Highway 61 to Manning Avenue; and
- the realignment of 100th Street in Cottage Grove.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, Public Works Director, 651-430-4339

County Board approves levies, budget for county for 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the county's 2023 budget Dec. 13, and the property tax levy that will support it.

The board approved a proposed 2023 budget and preliminary levy Sept. 27.

The approved amounts are:

- \$126.5 million for the county net levy;
- \$660,000 for the Regional Railroad Authority levy; and
- \$1.2 million for the Land and Water Legacy Program referendum levy.

The board also consented to a \$5.9 million levy for the Community Development Agency.

Under the adopted budget, the county net levy would increase 4.88% over 2022, and non-levy revenue would be \$113.2 million, a decrease of 14.9% from 2022.

As in nearly all counties, property owners in Washington County have experienced increased property values from the rise in sales prices, especially for residential properties. The median value of a home in the county went up about 20% in the past assessment year. The levy, combined with new construction and the rising valuations, results in the county's tax rate decreasing by 14.5%.

With the budget and levy that was approved, the median valued home in the county, which is \$386,500, assuming that its value increased by 20% in the past year, will be taxed \$919 for 2023 by the county, a \$40 or 4.6% increase over 2022.

New revenue in the budget will pay for services and materials in areas experiencing significant growth, such as deputies who patrol county communities, correctional officers who serve in the County Jail, and dispatchers who manage 9-1-1 calls in the Sheriff's Office.

There has been an increase in applications for service and more need for the health and human services that the county provides, such as services for those with mental health needs and for homelessness prevention.

Inflationary costs are having an impact on managing the county's vehicles, such as plow trucks and deputies' vehicles. The cost of replacement machinery, fuel, salt for clearing roads, and construction and building materials has risen substantially over 2022, raising the cost of doing business for the county. Also, the county's Information Technology costs related to data management, data security, data storage, and technology infrastructure are increasing.

The budget calls for 28.5 new positions countywide, which is typical in an average year. However, 31 positions have been eliminated, which includes 25 special project positions that are expiring, which are made up of mostly the federal emergency rental assistance program that was augmented during the pandemic. There is a slight decrease in the ratio of employees to residents from 2022.

The budget includes Gold Line construction costs, the bus-rapid transit line that will be built from downtown St. Paul to Woodbury roughly along Interstate 94 and then south along Bielenberg Drive in Woodbury. While money for construction is part of the proposed budget, no property tax dollars will be used to build the line. It is funded through the local option transportation sales tax and federal money.

All budget workshops and meetings may be viewed through webstreaming of the County Board meetings. See the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us/budget for other background on the budget.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy County Administrator, 651-430-6007, and Jan Lucke, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003